Trope: Celeb AU (Hannigram AU)

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by TigerPrawn

Summary

Will just wants a quiet life, but instead everything is turned upside down when famous superstar and leading omega, Hannibal Lecter, tries to get Will to help him to research for an upcoming role. Neither of their lives will be the same again, and Will has to confront the demons in his past.

Chapter 1

Will had of course heard the gossip around town. Though he still couldn't work out what the hell some famous leading omega was doing in a one horse backwater like Wolf Trap, and he didn't really care to know. He was happy keeping himself to himself and glad not to be the one being gossiped about for a change.

When Will had moved to Wolf Trap a couple of years earlier - with few possessions and his dog Winston - he'd just wanted to live a quiet life. He'd trained in boat mechanics, boat building and carpentry and had experience enough from odd jobs in the lumber trade that he could find work locally at the mills and on private contracts. It was enough to get by and allow him the privacy he had sought.

It was safe to say that he had no interest whatsoever in the omegan actor… until he turned up in his yard, all smiles and grace. His sweet and spicy scent, heavy even over the freshly cut wood, preceded him as Will turned to watch the omega alight smoothly from his expensive car and move forward, hand extended to shake -

"Hi, I'm Hannibal Lecter, you must be Will Graham? I've heard so much about you."

Will bristled and didn't move the large axe he was holding in both hands across his body, no intent whatsoever in shaking hands or making the man feel in any way welcome.

"Can I help you with something? This is private property." Will huffed, turning his back and going back to chopping wood, little care for the answer.

"Oh, I…" The omega seemed a little put out by the reaction but was clearly determined to remain polite. He walked around the stump Will was using as a chopping block, so that he was once more facing Will before he continued. "I'm researching for a role and thought you might be able to help me. I would of course pay you for your time."

That stopped Will mid chop and the chunk of wood toppled and fell off the stump he'd placed it on. He clenched his jaw but managed to growl out the words. "I don't want your damn money. I want to be left alone."

Lecter's smile dropped and Will wondered exactly how much this omega was used to getting his own way. Lecter's scent soured a little and Will wasn't sure if it was bitterness or disappointment. It had been a long while since he'd had cause to discern omegan scents.

"I'm busy." Will huffed out the words before picking up another chunk of wood and setting it on the block.

Before he could pull back the axe the omega stepped forward and placed a business card on top of the wood.

"I just want some tips on lumberjacking - if that is indeed the correct term?" There was a soft self-deprecating smile there. "If you ever have the time." Lecter said this so politely and cool that Will's rudeness felt sharp in contrast. Not that he cared to do a damn thing about that.

He hefted his axe again, eyes down and only seeing on his periphery the omega move away as his scent receded with him.

Will listened to the footsteps rustle to the car, and the car pull away, before he brought the axe down on the wood - card and all.

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Will frowned as he waited in line. There was never normally a line at the general store, but every time he'd had to go in and pick up milk or eggs and such in the last couple of weeks, there was a damn line.

It wasn't that people needed anything more than usual, it was that they wanted to gossip. He felt a surge of anger as he wondered if he had elicited the same reaction when he'd moved to the town. He wouldn't be surprised if that were the case.

And now the subject of the gossip was the famous Hannibal Lecter. Who must be causing quite the stir considering there were at least a half dozen more gossips in the line today than there had been three days earlier.

He had of course heard of Hannibal Lecter before he had come to the town. Had even seen a couple of his movies - though they weren't really Will's cup of tea. The rumour mill had it that he was researching a new role - a lumberjack. Interesting for an omega, not a traditional role, so no doubt another trite rom-com in the same vein as Baby Boom or some other shit. Omega goes it alone not realising that life can only be whole with a magical alpha penis. Will scoffed and felt bitter.

It made sense that Wolf Trap's famed lumber industry had attracted Hannibal, and just as much - he supposed - that he had. Will was one of the few people in town who was a private contractor rather than salaried with one of the local mills. He liked the freedom of it, and liked to set his own hours. In the past he'd had a couple of surgeries that he'd felt more

comfortable dealing with on his own terms and not having to take medical leave. It suited him, and yeah, truthfully, he was the perfect option for someone wanting to learn the ropes without taking up an apprenticeship or formal employment in the industry. But Will had no interest in taking on an apprentice, much less some stuck up Hollywood starlet who likely hadn't done a day's graft in their life.

"Doctor Du Maurier stitched him up of course, but I heard that Freddie told Brian, who told Jack - that he was lucky not to lose his thumb, possibly several fingers too! Lord knows what he was thinking!"

"I told him to go and talk to that Will Graham, but you how he-"

There were murmurs and shushes as they realised that Will had joined the line. He let out a heavy sigh and placed the box of eggs and pack of ham down on the nearest shelf and walked out.

Even when the gossip wasn't about him, it was damn well about him!

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"Are you quite alright Will? Do we need to reschedule?" Dr Du Maurier asked when he entered her office. Sitting in the waiting room had been even more anxiety inducing than usual. It felt like everyone was looking at him and passing judgement one way or the other.

"I'm fine." Will answered more gruffly than he'd intended and then scrubbed a rough hand over his face as he dropped into the chair next to her desk, set out for patients. "Sorry doctor. Just…"

"Yes, it's quite alright." She smiled comfortingly and stopped short of saying she understood, which he respected. Because she really didn't. "Was there anything you wanted to discuss or should we get on?"

Will shook his head and Du Maurier smiled again before standing and moving to the little trolley she had off to the side. She checked the vial resting on the tray atop the trolley before unsealing a needle and placing it on the tray.

"Actually…" Will started without even thinking. "Hannibal Lecter."

Bedelia was almost smirking when she turned back to him. "Ah. Yes our famous new resident."

"Is it true he nearly lost his hand?" Will asked, feeling himself cringe as he did so.

Bedelia let out a light chuckle. "Will, you know I can't discuss another patient with you." She indicated for him to stand - time to get his monthly hormone shot in the meat of his ass.

Will moved to the gurney at the side of the room and shucked down his trousers, leaning over and resting his elbows on it as he heard her drawing the hormones into the needle and moving over to him.

“That said…” she mused. “I can tell you, he really could do with someone to show him how to chop wood. How difficult can that be?”

Will wasn’t sure if she meant that chopping wood shouldn’t be so difficult or that showing him shouldn’t be. Any questions he might have were cut off by the stab of pain as the needle went in.

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“Uh, hey. Um, hi.” Will fidgeted and shuffled from foot to foot. He’d embarrassingly asked around until he found Hannibal was staying at the Crawford’s guest house. Bella had practically grinned when she’d answered the door and told him that Hannibal was in fact staying in one of their new holiday cabins on the grounds.

She had directed Will and now he stood on the little porch of the one bedroom, compact cabin, that was the new pride and joy of the Crawford’s and temporary home to the celebrity. No doubt lacking in options with no grand hotels in these parts, Will had scoffed to himself. Perhaps unfairly he wondered when Hannibal opened the door in sweat pants and a plain t-shirt - looking very much at home in the basic accommodation. His spiced scent wafted out as the door opened, making it seem all the more like home for the omega.

“Mr Graham! I…” Hannibal smiled, but with some colour rising, perhaps a little conscious of his appearance.

“Will.” He corrected. “Sorry, I should have called…” Will didn’t want to add - *but I destroyed your business card so that made it a tad difficult.*

“No, no it’s fine. I haven’t really been able to do as much as I’d like since…” Hannibal held up his hand - bandaged lightly across two fingers - hardly the injury he’d heard it to be but Will still felt somewhat responsible.

“Ah yes, the local rumour mill has you currently seeking a prosthetic replacement for at least half of your arm.” Will forced a chuckle and self-consciously rubbed at the back of his neck, trying to make light of it all.

Hannibal gasped and Will looked up then to see the omega was very much joking, clutching non-existent pearls to his throat. “By morning it will be my whole arm!”

Will couldn’t help a laugh at that. “You’re not wrong.”

Hannibal’s face softened into a gentle smile and he waved a hand as though dismissing the whole thing. “I’m used to gossips. Believe me, if this had happened back in Hollywood, not only would I have lost my entire arm but I would have been romantically linked to any and every alpha member of staff at the hospital treating me. There would have been tell-all stories from people I’d never met, within the day!”

“Damn, that sounds tiring.” Will sighed, speaking from experience, and noticed that Hannibal’s smile faltered. But then he seemed to shake it off.

“What can I do for you Mr… Will?”

“Actually…” Will went back to looking down and rubbing at his neck, feeling the heat on his skin there as the blush he couldn’t help rose. Damn hormones. They put him all over the place. He should have waited a few days before coming over, not coming so soon after his monthly shot. He cleared his throat. “I feel kinda responsible… well… I mean, to be fair, any idiot should know to stay away from sharp and pointy things, but I guess they don’t teach that kind of common sense in acting school.” Will realised he was being rude - even if it were true - and cleared his throat again. “What I’m saying is I don’t want you to go back to your movies with any less limbs than you arrived here with. So, I guess I can show you a few things if you still want me to.”

“That’s very kind of you, Will. I really appreciate that.” Hannibal’s tone was little more than a soft purr and it made Will shiver. He cursed the hormones again and gave a curt nod.

He was about to turn away - immediate task accomplished - when Hannibal put a hand on his arm - the soothing warmth of it distracting.

“Wait. I… I’m sort of… well I’m pretty bored. I can’t do anything for a few days until my hand is a little better. And there isn’t much around here to do. I’ve already read the scripts I’ve been sent, at least three times each, and believe me that doesn’t improve them one bit. Maybe you can keep me company for a while?”

Will huffed. “Let me guess, more independent omega realises that their life was in fact not complete without a good knotting?” He put his palm to his face the moment he realised he’d said the words aloud. “Oh… god, I’m sorry. I… I’m alone a lot. I forget how to people sometimes.”

Hannibal let out a hearty laugh. “Nonsense, I find it refreshing, and… really you’re not wrong.” Hannibal let out a gentle sigh. “Would you like to come in?”

Will dropped his hand and looked up, dead set on declining - politely. But Hannibal’s questioning and hopeful expression wasn’t something he could refuse considering he really did feel responsible for the omega’s injury.

He nodded and entered the cabin as Hannibal stepped aside for him.

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The cabin was actually more luxurious than Will had imagined it could be. The furnishings were all very plush and new. It was small but strangely sprawling thanks to the living area being open plan. The door opened into the living room, with a couple of overstuffed sofas, which went to the right into a kitchen-diner complete with small but solid dining table that would easily seat 4. At the back of the cabin, through the living room, two doors lead to the bathroom and the bedroom as far as Will could tell.

“Wow, Bella really went all out.” Will couldn’t hide how impressed he was, looking around as Hannibal poured them drinks.

“It’s not the Hilton but… I think I like it better. It reminds me of home.”

Hannibal poured out drinks in the kitchen and then indicated for Will to take a seat. They sat in opposite sofas and Will gladly sank back into it, noticing the scent of the omega on it. He must have sat there previously. The spicy edge to the sweetness made him want to melt into the cushions. He shook the feeling off and asked -

“Let me guess. Rags to riches? Grew up in some poor soviet state?” Will smiled over the rim of the tumbler of whiskey Hannibal had handed him. The really damn good stuff, he knew on aroma alone.

Hannibal chuckled. “No, not at all. My family… back in Lithuania, were nobility. I was raised quite privileged… initially.” Hannibal trailed off and looked thoughtful. A flicker of some dark emotion across his face before he continued. “But we had a hunting lodge on the grounds. It reminds me somewhat of this. In fact, Wolf Trap itself doesn’t feel terribly dissimilar to the forested grounds I played in as a child. I feel quite at home here.” Hannibal smiled.

“Damn. I guess I must seem like an idiot. That’s probably common knowledge to your fans, right? Please don’t take offense at my knowing nothing about you.” Will couldn’t help the little grin at the thought. He wondered how many people knew as little as he did about this guy.

Hannibal chuckled. “Oh, I’m sure anything of importance will work its way to you via the rumour mill.”

“Hey, I’m just happy I’m not the sole subject of gossip right now.” Will joined the chuckling.

Hannibal smiled but frowned and cocked his head to the side in curiosity. “Why would people gossip about you?” The smile turned into a grin. “What dark secrets are you hiding?”

Will continued to smile softly but shook his head and shrugged. “They’ve just never had a trans alpha around these parts is all. Apparently that’s noteworthy. But still… no one bothers me, I can live quietly and ignore them - that suits me fine.”

Hannibal’s smile was gone and he looked mildly mortified. “I’m sorry Will… I didn’t know… I mean, I didn’t wish to raise a sensitive subject.”

“Why would you know? It’s not exactly like I wear a badge, or walk around naked ready for scrutiny.” Will shrugged again but tried to grow the smile to reassure the omega. “And it isn’t a sensitive subject, I promise. I just… I have no problem with being trans, with people knowing it, with people discussing the wider subject of it. I just hate people speculating about my business… and my genitalia.” He added with a light laugh.

Hannibal smiled and nodded, his own reassurance. But it felt awkward now, and Will hated that. This always happened. He thought maybe he should excuse himself and just see Hannibal when he came over, if he still wanted to. But then Hannibal looked thoughtfully at him and replied -

“Do you know of Matt Brown? He’s an actor. He’s trans and has been very public about it. I remember reading a quote from him once - ‘You don’t need to know the specifics of my genitalia unless I’m fucking you.’”

Will laughed. He wasn’t sure what amused him more, the quote or someone who seemed as prim and proper as Hannibal Lecter cursing.

“Sounds like a good guy.”

“Oh god, no he’s a terrible asshole. Insufferable actually.” Hannibal’s indignation was passionately delivered.

Will laughed harder. “Well. Good to know, even trans people can be assholes.”

“Present company excluded.” Hannibal purred.

Will huffed a short laugh and downed the last of his tumbler. Hannibal’s eyes seemed fixed on his for a moment and Will couldn’t help but feel somewhat intimidated.

He scrambled forward and put his glass onto the reclaimed wood coffee table between them.

“Um, I should go. I don’t want to drink you out of whiskey. Wouldn’t be polite.”

Will was on his feet even as Hannibal’s face fell. Only for a split second before the public mask he seemed to wear slipped easily back in place.

Interesting.

There was something curious about the omega. The way he schooled his expression and only allowed people to see what he wanted them to. If Will wasn’t so good at catching those in between moments people had - the subtle changes in microexpressions - then he might not have seen it.

But that really wasn’t a good reason to get friendly with someone, nor was the enticing scent. And Will had to admit that maybe it wasn’t his earlier hormone shot that had him interested in the omega. Life was too complicated, and it seemed like Hannibal’s was as well - they would definitely do well to avoid further complications.

Will turned as he got to the door, Hannibal close behind him. Too close as it happens. When he turned they practically ran into each other.

Will was hit upclose by a wave of the most amazing omegan scent he had ever experienced, fresh like rain on concrete - that sort of unexpected but real smell. It took him a moment to compose himself before muttering.

“Come to my place on Saturday. Early. I’ll teach you how to chop wood without losing any extremities.”

Hannibal chuckled. “I appreciate it.”

He was still a little too close and they both paused for what seemed like an eternity, as if waiting for something else. But finally Will gave a curt nod and left.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will starts letting people close - but is it too little, too late?

"Ok, but you're still dropping your shoulder…" Will huffed. He watched, arms folded across his chest as he leaned back on a stump. He couldn't help the grin attempting to force through his stern gaze. He schooled his expression as Hannibal turned to look at him with narrowed eyes.

They exchanged cold looks for a moment before Hannibal turned back to the block and raised the axe once more. Will let the grin spread this time, though he'd likely hide it again if the omega turned.

For now he allowed himself to admire the athletic and graceful form before him. Hannibal was not built to chop wood, but then some may have said that of Will once. He wasn't someone to stand by stereotypes. He knew omegas came in all shapes and sizes, or in his own case, weren't omegas at all.

In the last few weeks he'd weirdly become fond of the actor. He wasn't at all as Will first imagined he might be. Despite the celebrity lifestyle he was no doubt used to, and his aristocratic roots, Hannibal was down to earth and had an interesting sense of humour that Will quite enjoyed. There was often a dark edge to the banter, interspersed with terrible puns, and Will had found himself smiling and laughing more since he'd met the man than he had in the couple of years since he'd moved to Wolf Trap. He'd actually felt weirdly flattered when Hannibal gave him his copy of the movie script to read for his opinion.

They had talked some about Hannibal's past - more than had ever been fully printed about the omega, Will was sure of that. Will could definitely empathise with the loneliness of his childhood. Hannibal's family had died and he was shipped to a distant uncle, that giving him the impetus to finally strike out on his own and follow his dreams into acting. With one parent dead and another that might as well have been, Will couldn't help but feel a connection there whether he wanted to or not.

There was a flirtation there too, though Will tried to act oblivious. It was for the best. Neither of them needed the complication no matter how tempting it sometimes was. There had been at least two occasions when Will had thought for a moment that Hannibal wanted to kiss him. Will had walked him to his car and they had stood and talked awhile. When they said goodbye there felt something in the air - an expectation never fulfilled. The second time it happened, Hannibal had stared at his lips in a way that made Will's heart skip for a moment, before self-consciousness set in. He couldn't help wondering if he was being scrutinised - if

his lips looked too omegan to Hannibal. That was the last time he walked Hannibal to his car - yeah, neither of them needed this complication.

Even so, they were falling into a comfortable routine, it was easy and nice and damn Bella Crawford's packed lunches didn't help any. Lovely home cooked meals she sent along with Hannibal, that he was sure were becoming less picnic and more romantic dinner for two as the days marched on. It became harder and harder for Will to keep it from his mind. The easy way they were with each other, the few days Hannibal had ended up staying late for a cook out - getting to know each other and flirting despite his reservations.

But for Hannibal could he really be anything other than a silly fling? If even that? Surely the actor was too smart to get involved with someone not knowing whether he could trust it to be kept a secret from the media? Not that Will would kiss and tell, but the town *was* full of eagle-eyed gossips. And that was the tip of an extremely large iceberg of complications - not least Will's own situation and insecurities. What could Hannibal see in that? In him? He was just fooling himself to think anyone would be interested. Maybe just for sex if the omega was curious?

As much as a fling after his recent - now going on at least four years - dry spell, would be welcome, Will wasn't sure he could detach enough for it to be just that but wasn't sure he'd want more either. When he was just an omega interested in other omegas it was pretty easy to get laid with no strings. But now he'd started on this journey it just wasn't that simple. Omegas wanted other omegas if that's where their tastes went. Or they wanted alphas or betas. They didn't want something that wasn't quite anything. They didn't want an alpha with a tiny hormone-induced knot. They didn't want an omega who was almost an alpha, but never quite would be.

Will sighed, watching as Hannibal improved his technique on the next blow. They's spent weeks using different tools and implements, Will had even arranged a couple of days up at the mill. A lot of it was health and safety and theory - things Hannibal probably didn't need to know in the long run but that Will would have insisted on for any apprentice. Then they had taken a slight detour into carpentry and Hannibal seemed to have developed an enjoyment of whittling whilst Will wondered on occasion if the omega was stalling. But now, axes were the order of the day.

He huffed. "Once you've mastered the *basic* axe I might consider giving you a proper chopper."

Hannibal stopped and looked at him then, a quirked brow and grin thrown over his shoulder.

Dammit! Even when he was trying not to flirt this shit kept happening!

Hannibal went back to chopping and Will sighed quietly. He loved male omegas, always had. The grace and masculinity, it was such a beautiful combination. But the kind of male omegas into other omegas were a certain type, and Hannibal Lecter really didn't seem that type. Not that it mattered. This really wasn't something he should pursue.

Will turned and went to the shed - Hannibal might not be quite ready for the chainsaw, and yet… the noise it would provide and the need for concentration… At least while that was

buzzing away it might quiet his brain. That was a lot of the reason he'd got into lumberjacking in the first place.

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They were only an hour into the basics of chainsaw operation and maintenance when Hannibal placed it heavily back down on the workbench they sat at outside the shed. The omega got up from the bench opposite Will and retrieved a bottle of water from his bag the other end of the bench and then sat next to Will. The nearness of the man, and his beautiful scent, set Will immediately on edge.

Will looked up at him quizzically and Hannibal looked like he was struggling to say something before he finally, and hesitantly said -

"Will, I like you. I…" Hannibal trailed off and it was most uncertain Will had seen him.

Will frowned. "Um, I like you too? I mean… you're ok. Some of your films are a bit… well, I'm no critic but you have very little on screen chemistry with some people. Maybe you should stay away from romance movies?" Will knew he was rambling, but he also suspected where this conversation was going and wanted to avoid the inevitable - a hookup, or even more, was just not going to work out. "I mean, this one, the lumberjack film… The script… well it's better? But there's still something off, but then you are just… well it's good that you're doing this research and-"

"Will." Hannibal raised his voice and Will stopped, swallowing hard. "I like you… I want to spend time with you… whilst not chopping wood. Maybe when I return to Los Angeles we could… stay in touch? I don't want to presume-"

Hannibal huffed out a sigh like he was still trying to work it all out in his head - how best to phrase it. But then he must have decided actions spoke louder than words because he leaned in, closing the space between them in one graceful movement and his lips were pressed against Will's.

Hannibal tasted even more glorious than his scent suggested and Will couldn't help but open to him, enjoying the slide of their tongues and the way their mouths fit so perfectly together. For a long moment he was lost to it. It was only the omega's soft moan and his hand coming up to bunch in Will's shirt, that brought Will back to his senses. He pulled back and away, moving as far out of reach as he could without falling off the stool.

"No." Will's reply was abrupt. "I… I can't do that."

Hannibal preempted Will's thoughts - "Will, if I cared that you were trans I wouldn't have been flirting with you for the last few weeks. Though you seem to have been oblivious."

"Oh, believe me, I was not oblivious." Will rubbed a hand roughly over his face. "But… it, it doesn't matter. This… whatever this is, it won't work."

"Why? You think me so shallow? You think an actor can't date a lumberjack?" Hannibal growled.

Will let his hand slip from his face and glared at Hannibal. “You know that isn’t what I think.”

“Then what? Why don’t you-”

“I can’t Hannibal.” Will cut him off as he raised his voice and stood. “I just can’t. I… I don’t want to hurt you. I can’t be what you need me to be. It won’t work out.”

Hannibal seemed like he was going to say something but then looked down and silently nodded. There was quiet for a moment before he cleared his throat and said - “Maybe we should call it a day for today.” He got up and walked away.

Will remained seated, letting out a sigh as he heard Hannibal walking over to his car and then slowly pulling up the drive.

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Hannibal didn’t turn up the next day.

Will supposed they really had no firm arrangement, but he had become quickly accustomed to the omega arriving promptly at 10am every day and felt the loss keenly. Hannibal’s scent, that had begun to linger about the place, now thinned and Will felt a pang in his chest over it.

He didn’t return the day after. Nor the next.

Will tried to stifle his sadness with anger. Hannibal clearly wasn’t as dedicated to accurately portraying an omega holding their own in the lumber trade as he had made Will believe. Will felt bitter about that, just to try and ignore how bitter he actually felt about being abandoned by someone close to him. Again. First his family, then Francis...

But he really had no right to feel that way about Hannibal, he mused. The omega had just needed him for this research, nothing more. Regardless of Hannibal’s interest, it wasn’t like they owed each other anything.

Will kept telling himself that even as he waited on the Crawford’s doorstep for someone to answer. After a minute Bella did and her face dropped. Pity. Will knew the expression well.

“He’s gone.” She stated softly before Will could even ask. “I had hoped he would come say goodbye to you… but then, I had hoped for a little more than that.” A sad smile caught Will off guard.

He shrugged, taking a lot of effort to do so though not as much as forcing the words - “It’s fine. I just wondered. I guess he’s done all the research he needed to.” He turned and started to walk away despite knowing it was rude, and the fact that before he turned he could see she was itching to say something more. He was almost at his car when he decided he couldn’t be a complete asshole and turned back. “Um, thanks… for all the lunches you packed. They were great.” He huffed a laugh and scratched at the back of his neck, eyes lowered as he admitted - “I’m going to miss them.”

He looked up again at Bella's silence and was surprised by her expression. She was biting her lower lip and looking like there was something she was hesitating to say. Will frowned and was about to leave when she blurted -

"I… I didn't make them. I'm amazed anyone would believe me capable of such wonderful food." She chuckled awkwardly and then averted her eyes as she considered her words. She winced as she finally continued - "Hannibal made them."

Will's frown deepened and he couldn't attempt to hide his confusion.

Bella let out a deep sigh, seemingly done with whatever pretense had been going on. "Do you want to come in a minute, Will? I'll make you a coffee… I can guarantee I at least make good coffee."

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Bella did make good coffee. But apparently she did not make good food. Or at least, not the food Hannibal had been bringing with him to their working day.

"It all started… oh I don't know. The day before he came to work with you? I guess that was the day after you dropped by? Anyway, we just got to talking in the morning and he asked me if he should take something as thanks. I said I didn't know you well, I mean… none of us do really." She gave him a slightly pointed look and yeah, he knew some of the blame for that was on him. "I didn't know what he should bring, if anything… and then I made a quip that maybe he should just take a lunch. Because… well, you always seem slightly underfed and in need of a good meal and home comforts."

Bella's look was soft and motherly and Will understood. He knew how he looked to other people - sad, lonely, troubled. They weren't wrong, not really.

"Well, his face just lit right up. Said cooking was a passion of his and asked to use the kitchen here instead of the little stove in the cabin. Of course, I said yes. I mean, I admit I was a little star struck." She chuckled. "Which… is sort of stupid on reflection. I've never met someone so down to earth and just… real. It has been an absolute pleasure having him in here every evening cooking more and more elaborate dishes. And chatting… about… well, mostly about you Will."

Will shifted uncomfortably. "Yes, people around here seem to talk about me a tad too much." He muttered the words and Bella agreed with a sad smile and a nod.

"You're not wrong. I think… I don't want to speak out of turn, but Will half of the gossip is because you don't… gel? The community would absolutely welcome you with open arms, they do welcome you, but you keep yourself at arm's reach and so people fill in the gaps of what they know about you with idle gossip. It's not right, I'm not saying at all that it's right… but maybe, if you came to the markets or the fayre, or… just got involved with the community?"

She clearly saw the discomfort then because she cleared her throat and continued -

“It wasn’t gossip - what Hannibal had to say. He started just talking about what you were doing and how he hoped to do you and your job justice in the movie. And then… Damn.” She chuckled again, light and free - her hair catching the light as she shook her head. “He did not shut up about you. If I had to put a word on it, well, I’d call it smitten.”

She was grinning at Will and waiting for a reaction he wasn’t sure he could give. His shoulders slumped as he heaved a sigh and looked down at the mug of coffee cooling in his hands.

“I know. I… I thought he liked me. I tried not to let him. I tried to, urgh…”

“Will Graham, why one earth would you try and dissuade someone from liking you?” The tone was like his mother and Will cringed.

He wanted to tell her. All the hurt, all the pain in his past. Everything that put him off ever going through that again. Instead he just gave the stock response his brain had formulated over the years -

“No one really wants a trans alpha, I’ll be a curiosity at best. I can’t give him what he needs.”

She frowned at him and cocked her head. “I’m sorry to hear that you think that. I don’t believe it’s true, I think you’re selling both yourself and Hannibal short. But… well, I guess it’s none of my business. I’ve done enough meddling letting that man pass his food off as mine so as not to embarrass you. Even though it meant he got no credit for the care and attention he was giving you. Even though it meant you were oblivious to the fact that the poor boy desperately wanted to court you.”

Will took in a sharp breath and found he was unable to let it out. A stab in his chest drove him to his feet and he muttered - “Thanks for the coffee Mrs Crawford.” before dashing from the house.

*

At some point during their time together, Hannibal had casually given Will his number again. In fact he had taken Will’s antiquated nokia and put the number in himself, saying that Will should call him if ever plans changed or it was inconvenient for Hannibal to come by.

Will had pretty much forgotten all about it, so insignificant it had seemed at the time, until he returned from seeing Bella.

He stared at the number in his phone for a good long while before deciding he was not going to call. Part of him knew he should, just to not be rude and at least thank the man for the meals he had provided. But that would leave the way open to discuss *them*. Which was problematic.

There was no *them* and there never would be. Will wasn’t about to drag someone down with his bullshit baggage, especially someone he liked as much as he liked Hannibal. Because damn, did he like Hannibal.

The empty feeling in his chest had progressed from an ache to a stabbing pain since returning from chatting with Bella and he felt angry about it. Bitter in some respects. Angry at himself for not keeping that emotional distance from Hannibal, and still a deep and resentful anger towards Francis for creating so much of the baggage that Will had to lug around with him. He wished he could get past it, wished he could believe that anyone would feel different toward him and treat him differently than Francis had, but… it just wasn't worth the risk. He couldn't get hurt like that again, it would break him completely.

Will lost count of how many times he stopped and lost himself in thought over the next few days, fighting the urge to call Hannibal. Fighting the urge to call Francis too and say all the things he hadn't managed to before they had parted. But neither call would do him any good, so he resisted.

By the time the weekend rolled around Will wasn't sure what to do with himself. He had planned his work out with Hannibal in mind, so there was nothing left to do on Saturday as he had expected to give the omega a break to relax and soothe his no doubt aching muscles. Perhaps Will had expected to socialise or something too? He wasn't sure because he hadn't really left any work for himself until his next Client project landed on the following Tuesday - some carpentry work - and now he was at a loose end. Something he always tried to avoid.

After a day of fixing up a few things around the property, to the point where he was creating work that wasn't even really there, Will felt uneasy. And, for the first time in a very long time - lonely.

As the sun began to go down he grabbed a tumbler and a quarter full whiskey bottle and took at seat out on the porch to watch the raccoons that snooped around his property, come and go. It was only when he finished the bottle that he realised he had no more alcohol in the house - he had been avoiding going to the store lately if he could, and now it was just another thing to regret.

"Why should I feel bad about it?" He muttered under his breath - the raccoons looking up at him curiously before foraging again. He reached down and patted Winston's head, the dog whined in response. "Why should I hide away because people have nothing better to gossip about?" His voice rose and the raccoons looked up again before moving off. Maybe Bella had been right though? Maybe if he had tried to get involved with people in the town then they wouldn't feel the need to gossip about him like this? He huffed at the thought and felt angry about it.

"Maybe I should just go and socialise and they can just…" he ran out of steam, not that it mattered now that Winston was the only one listening. Even so, he got to his feet and whistled for the dog, deciding it was time to go and get a drink at the local bar.

Thirty minutes walking in the near dark through the wood and into the town's high street, Will and Winston found themselves outside the bar - *Margot's* - and considerably much more sober for the effort. He no longer had anywhere near the nerve needed to go in as he had initially planned, but then someone called out to him -

"Will Graham?" He turned and saw one of the local doctors - a psychiatrist he believed - something Bloom, talking to some of the patrons sat outside and smiling at him. "Now, you

can't tell me you've come all the way from your place and you're not going to stop for a drink? At least let me get some fresh water for your dog." Her tone and expression were kindly and Will noticed everyone was looking at him with the same open and welcoming expressions.

Fuck. Had they all just been waiting for him to join in? The thought made him feel much worse than he had before, but there was no way he could refuse water for Winston without seeming like a complete asshole. Especially as Ms Bloom had now crouched down and Winston had trotted over to her, tongue lolling and tail wagging.

She stood again as he started over and lead both Will and Winston into the bar.

*

Alana Bloom, he discovered, was the wife of the owner - Margot Verger. In an effort to make him feel welcome and apparently not have him have to fill any kind of awkward silence, the pair of them had chattered away at him about the history of the town and the bar itself. It had previously belonged to Margot's father and had been called the Suckling Pig, but when he had died and her brother had been arrested for some criminal activity they did not divulge, she had gained control and updated the place. Margot had particularly seemed to sympathise with him over being the subject of small town gossip - apparently something her family had been on the receiving end of many a time thanks to her brother. Will wondered what the story was there but wasn't going to pry considering how much he sympathised with her in return.

So the evening was actually nice. Welcoming. Every now and then someone else would come over and say hi, introduce themselves, ask what he was working on. Because of course they all knew a lot more about him than he did about them. He had invitations to other local events, and several people bought him drinks. In fact by the time Alana offered to drive him and Winston home he was pretty sloshed.

He didn't realise quite how drunk he actually was until he spent ten minutes trying to get the key in the lock only to realise he hadn't even locked up before he had left.

That should have been the hint to get a glass of water and some headache pills and go to bed. But instead he flopped onto the sofa, Winston looking at him expectantly. Judging him? As he scrolled around on his phone. Finally he hit the call button - it had seemed like a good idea in that moment.

"Hannibal? Is this you? Voicemail? Ugh… I just. I wanted to say… I just. Urghh… Never mind. It doesn't matter. I miss you. It doesn't matter."

He hung up the phone and looked at Winston. "What you looking at?!" He demanded before passing out.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Maybe it's time that Will started to open up to someone, and wouldn't Hannibal be that perfect someone?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Will… I… Can you call me back? I really…" A heavy sigh on the end of the line. "I really want to hear your voice. Um, your sober voice."

The message ended there and Will groaned. He had no idea what the hell he had ended up drinking at that damn bar. He woke with a vague dream that he had called Hannibal… and then had an interesting conversation with Winston about love whilst they smoked cigars. When he woke and saw he had a voicemail, he listened despite his thumping head and now he wished he hadn't. It instantly brought a flash of the kiss back to mind - it had become something of an illustration in his mind of how close they had grown. But he wouldn't fool himself into thinking it could actually work out, as much as his heart tried to convince him.

He groaned again as he managed to drag himself to the shower, stand in the water long enough to wash off some of the bar stank, and then fall into bed naked and still damp.

When he woke later it was night time and his phone was flashing again. This time a message rather than voicemail so Will tapped it open.

~Will, I understand that talking might make you uncomfortable. I realise you were drunk when you called and perhaps you would rather forget the whole thing and pretend it never happened. I completely understand but would really appreciate the chance to talk to you if you ever feel up to it.

Will felt a mixture of annoyance and sadness. He deleted the message and the voicemail, instantly regretting it but at the same time knowing it was the best way to just get the hell over this.

*

Will had been grateful for the six solid weeks of carpentry he'd been contracted for - building bespoke animal containers for transporting some zoo animals. It was the sort of work he liked - working with his hands on something new and interesting - getting to learn the requirements of each animal. And keeping busy was just what he needed.

Jobs seemed to be a little less frequent on the horizon and he started to wonder if it was worth contracting with one of the mills again. He still wasn't feeling quite himself, still needed to get his head back in check, and maybe days on end of the buzz of the lumber mill would help with that.

He was considering calling Chilton's Lumber when he received a curious call -

"Mr Graham?" A pleasant and perky female voice on the other end.

"Yes."

"Hi." The voice was bright and altogether too cheerful. "I'm calling from Starling-Lecter and we've been recommended your-"

"Lecter?" Will growled. He hadn't heard from Hannibal again since he'd called back after Will's drunken night weeks earlier. It had both hurt and been exactly what he thought best, so it was hard to feel bitter. If anything he felt angry that he was hearing that name again after trying so hard to forget the man. "Listen, tell Hannibal-"

"Oh! Um, sorry sir. I don't know Mr Lecter personally, I'm calling from the production department. We've been recommended your services as a set-builder. Starling-Lecter will be filming a new production on location in Fairfax County and will need some additional sets. Is this something you are able to assist with? I can send you the specs so that you can send a quote."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Will snapped, instantly feeling like an asshole, but too confused to reel it back.

"Sorry, sir… um…" The girl stammered. "I… could send you the spec?"

Will hung up, feeling like even more of an asshole, which made him feel fucking angry.

All he wanted was a quiet life. Away from complications. Sure he had actually started spending time in the town - at Margot's bar and local events - but he had no interest in meeting anyone for more than friendship. And… he wanted to lay that all on Francis. He wanted to blame it on the sadness and cruelty and mind fuckery that omega had put him through, but… It wasn't just him. It was Hannibal too. He had to finally admit to himself, he was never going to be interested in anyone whilst he was still hung up on the man. Which he fucking was, goddammit!

In a fit of anger then Will jabbed at his phone until he was dialling the number he had been unable to bring himself to delete despite his better judgement.

"Will?" Hannibal sounded surprised and so damn pleased that Will hesitated.

"Leave me alone Hannibal. I don't want to hear from you, or any of your friends, or fucking whoever else. Okay?" Will finally managed to growl out.

There was a pause before Hannibal replied calmly "I don't know what you're talking about Will, but if you want me to leave you alone I will… I have. I respect you too much to push

myself onto you. And I respect myself too much to invest feelings where they aren't returned."

Will's heart broke a little and a strangled sound gurgled up through his throat. "Hannibal." He breathed the omega's name with so much regret he couldn't attempt to hide it. "I…" Their kiss flashed to mind. He wanted to say the feelings were returned, that he had felt that same connection and wishe he could pursue it. But that it terrified him. But the words were cancelled out in his brain before they reached his mouth - tramped down by memories and truths. No one would ever want him. As interested as they might seem, it would never work out because he could never be enough for them in the long run and he couldn't do that again.

He hung up the phone without another word.

*

"Excuse me, can you point me in the direction of a Mister Will Graham? Mrs Crawford said I might find him here."

Will's ears perked up at the politely drawled question and felt several pairs of eyes fall on him in response before Margot answered -

"Just at the end of the bar."

Will looked up to see Margot wincing apologetically and a lovely red-headed female alpha smiling at him.

She strode forward with purpose and held out her hand. "A real pleasure Mister Graham, I've heard so much about you." She said before he could even offer his own hand, which he did somewhat awkwardly.

She had a strong shake and a firm grip that made him feel bolstered rather than inadequate as he often did around other alphas.

"Can I help you?" Will asked, cocking a brow and wanting to be polite if only for the fact that this lady gave off a really good vibe and he was trying to turn over a new leave of not being quite as big an asshole as possible.

She installed herself on the barstool next to him and then held a hand up to Margot, who was watching intently. "Two of what he's drinking please." She smiled and Margot nodded before going about fixing two more whiskey sodas.

Will downed the dregs in his glass and pushed it away in anticipation, having recently learned just to be gracious and take the damn drink when someone offered it.

"My name is Clarice Starling, I'm Hannibal's partner." Will bristled at the words and she grew a lopsided grin. "Not too keen to hear the name? Well, truthfully, I'm sorry for that, but I felt the need to come and apologise and put things right. If I can."

Will felt a cold chill run through him. This was Hannibal's alpha. How could he have ever hoped to be such a thing to the omega when he could have a *real* alpha - someone who was

clearly sassy and self-assured. They probably enjoyed fun banter and beautiful dinners and...

Will could smell his own scent turn sour with the loss, just as Starling did and she frowned at him.

“I’m not explaining myself very well.” She took a gulp of the drink that Margot set in front of her. “When Hannibal returned from here, well, he was not in a good way. Clearly pining over some alpha and so desperately sad. We’ve been friends a long while, used to work on independent movies together when he first moved to the US - before he hit the big time. He told me all about this grumpy, salty alpha he had developed feelings for. So much so that… well he was doing a lot of thinking. He didn’t think this alpha felt the same way, but that didn’t mean that he didn’t want to explore his own thoughts and feelings that his time in this town had stirred up. So… he quit the movie he was researching.” She shrugged as though it was nothing and took another swig.

“The lumberjack movie?” Will was shocked almost to indignation. What the hell had even been the point of any of their time together then?

She nodded and set her glass down. “Yeah, sure did. He said he was fed up of making these carbon copy movies - independent omega meets alpha, wants to be their own person but realises that actually life is better with the addition of a magical alpha penis.”

Will barked a laugh at the words he had pretty much once said word for word to Hannibal himself. Starling grinned at him.

“Right? He isn’t wrong. So he called me. Years ago we’d talked about setting up a production company together but the time wasn’t right for either of us back then. But he calls me and basically offers a blank cheque. Wants to make movies about real people. And, well, that is something I am very much interested in. So we went into partnership.”

A realisation hit Will - “You’re his partner. His *business* partner.”

She chuckled. “What the hell else did you think I meant? Surely you can’t have thought there is anything between me and Hannibal. That would just… well, it would never happen in a month of sundays.”

“Why not?” Will felt strangely defensive. “Hannibal is one of the most genuine, talented and smart people I’ve ever met. Anyone would be lucky to have him.”

She chuckled again, a little lighter and longer this time. “Well, that may be. But we’re practically siblings. Besides, thing is, no one else can stand a chance whilst this same alpha I’ve been speaking of, leaves him a drunken voicemail and then calls - initiating contact - to tell him not to initiate contact. Poor guy doesn’t know whether he is coming or going.”

Will flushed. His face burning all the way to the tips of his ears.

Starling smiled fondly. “And, I have to admit, that is why I’m here. An apology really. I don’t want you think badly of Hannibal. Like he’s a crazy stalker or some such. He mentioned you is all, a lot… I mean, I cannot tell you how many times I had to hear all about you when he’d

phone me from his lodgings. How good you are with your hands. And I don't know what possessed me, but when we got the permits to come film on location in your neck of the woods it just seemed like such a great idea to get you involved." She held up her hands in surrender. "I admit to my meddling. Because you two are clearly smitten and need a little help along." She sipped her remaining drink, now mostly ice water, and looked at Will over the rim of her glass. "Mrs Crawford agrees."

Will clenched his jaw. He could see her jovial manner, hear the care and concern in her words, but he couldn't shake his ingrained feeling this was nobody's business. That people were prying, as usual. Anger crawled over him.

"Hannibal decided he doesn't want to do ridiculous rom-coms anymore, so you try to create a real life one for him?" Will growled. "Is that what this is? You think your coming here and telling me all of this will have me running to him?" Will stood, pulling his wallet and throwing some cash onto the bar. "That isn't real life Ms Starling, life is cruel and shitty and rarely has a happy ending. I'd appreciate if you'd mind your own damn business." Will snarled and stalked out of the bar.

*

"No!" Will cried out and sat up in the bed, dripping with cold sweat.

He could hear Winston whining. He shivered as every bone shook - his whole body vibrating from the nightmare he'd had. He sobbed into his hands for a moment before rubbing them over his face and trying to focus on the room in the dim morning light. He looked at the clock by his bed - 8:13am

"It's eight thirteen a.m., I'm in Wolf Trap-"

There was a light knock at the front door and Winston whimpered and barked quietly in response, looking cautiously at Will. Will flicked his hand and the dog scrambled from the room and towards the front door, waiting for Will to catch up.

He felt momentarily disoriented as he tried to remember what day of the week it was and whether he was meant to be working. Was it someone from Chilton's wondering where the hell he was? No not yet, they would likely wait until at least 9 to see where he was.

He stumbled to the door, still shivering and sweat dripping off of him, Winston looked back and whimpered his concern. Will swallowed hard, trying unsuccessfully to pull himself together as he tugged the door open.

"Will! Are you alright?"

Will didn't have chance to register his surprise at seeing Hannibal on his porch before the omega moved in and took hold of him, supporting Will as he slumped forward a little.

"Fine." Will managed to get out, though it was little more than a quiet grumble. He could feel himself being maneuvered, feeling heavy and sick as he was deposited back in his bed.

*

Francis sneered at him, that look of disgust from the omega, that Will had grown all too accustomed to.

That sneer seemed to morph into something all the more cruel as Francis himself morphed into a great red dragon.

Will opened his mouth to scream but nothing came out, as ever growing jaws closed around him and swallowed him whole.

"Will. Will, you're dreaming…" Will processed the words and stopped thrashing against the grip he was held in - something somewhat gentler than the jaws of a beast.

He blinked a few times and the wiped the sweat from his brow as he panted and allowed his eyes to adjust to the afternoon light.

"Hannibal?" He caught the scent of the omega before realising he sat next to him on the edge of the bed. He'd thought he dreamt the man being there at first, assuming he had hallucinated the knock at the door and his arrival. He clenched his jaw, feeling exposed and vulnerable at being seen this way. "What are you doing here?" He managed through grit teeth.

Hannibal, for his part, released Will entirely and stood, moving a respectable distance from the bed. "I apologise, you were having a nightmare and I was worried you might injure yourself. I… I'm sorry to had dropped in at such an inopportune time. I wanted to see you and apologise. I didn't know about the company calling you, and I didn't know that Clarice was going to visit you. I'm terribly embarrassed by their meddling and hope you won't hold it against me and allow me to at least apologise before I leave?"

"You've apologised." Will huffed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "You can go."

Hannibal nodded and then hung his head slightly. "Of course. If… Is there anything I can get you before I go? You seem unwell."

Will let out a mirthless laugh. "I'm not unwell. This is just my reality Hannibal."

Hannibal seemed to understand, his eyes widening slightly. "Will…" the name escaped his lips on a gentle breath. "I'm so sorry for my intrusion."

"Accepted. Can you please leave?" Will asked, irritably. There was a twist of pain in his stomach at Hannibal's realisation - he no doubt could now scent that sweet omega aroma that Will was lightly exuding.

Hannibal nodded again, his jaw tight and clearly so much held within. He wrung his hands for a moment and then started towards the door. Probably leaving for good, Will considered. Probably never see him again.

The thought was a pain in his head and chest. "Hannibal, wait. Could you… Do you want to just wait in the kitchen? I'll freshen up and then I'll come out."

Hannibal perked up and nodded. “Certainly, Will.”

Will let out a deep breath when the door closed behind the omega, finally dragging himself from the twisted and damp sheets to change into a clean t-shirt and some sweatpants. He was feeling much better than he had earlier, but still not 100% and having a visitor didn’t help his comfort level at all. Though… strangely, that discomfort came from his physical symptoms rather than Hannibal’s presence as it might anyone else.

He tried not to consider that too deeply as he proceeded to the kitchen and immediately put on the coffee pot before grabbing a bottle of water from the fridge.

“Would you like anything?” He asked, clearing his throat first.

“A coffee will be fine.” Hannibal smiled and took a seat at the breakfast bar when Will indicated for him to do so.

“I’m sorry if I seem curt, I… It’s a phantom heat. I get them maybe twice a year now. Hopefully they should disappear altogether with a couple more years hormone therapy.” Will said, despite himself. He had never really discussed things like this with anyone other than Francis and didn’t feel the need to justify himself to anyone regarding it. And yet… he wanted to tell Hannibal. He sort of hated that.

Hannibal smiled gently. “It’s quite alright Will, you don’t owe me any explanations. I’m the one who has turned up unannounced. For which I can only apologise... again.”

Will chuckled and took his own seat opposite Hannibal as he waited for the coffee to brew. “At this rate we’ll be apologising to each other until sundown.”

Hannibal joined the chuckle and smiled warmly “Yes, I suppose so. Though, in fairness I feel I have a lot more to apologise for, if you’ll allow me?”

Will shook his head and waved a dismissive hand.

“I… I’m glad to see you at least, Will.” Hannibal said hesitantly. “I’ve missed you.”

Will clenched his jaw again before letting out a sigh and allowing - “I’ve missed you too, but that doesn’t… I mean, I just…” He wasn’t sure how many times he could rebuff the omega, and it wasn’t like this was even a proposition. Maybe they could at least try to be friends. “I-”

Will was interrupted by a loud knocking at the front door, so loud that it caused Winston to startle and bark.

Will frowned as he got to his feet, wondering for the second time that day who the hell would be knocking. On this occasion when he opened the door he almost stumbled back - immediately overwhelmed by loud voices and flashing lights.

“Mr Graham is it true you are courting Hannibal Lecter?”

“Mr Graham, Mr Graham - we understand Hannibal is there now, can we get a photo for our readers? Of you both together?”

“Is it true you are genetically omega? How does being transgender affect your sex life? How does Hannibal feel about-”

Will slammed the door closed on the shouts of the small gathering of paparazzi. He was shaking with anger and anxiety when he realised Hannibal had moved to stand behind him.

“Will, I'm so sorry. I had no idea… someone must have tipped them off.”

Will turned a dark glare on Hannibal. “This is… I don't want this.” He couldn't find any other words.

“I know. I'm sorry… I've tried my best to keep the rumours at bay. This is why I needed to talk to you… to let you know…”

Will felt his heart drop into his stomach. Had Hannibal only come here to let him know he was now the subject of gossip in Hollywood as well as Wolf Trap?

“When I returned home there had been some attempt to link us romantically, and unfortunately Clarice’s visit did nothing to quell them. I've never had much of a private life for this very reason and I'm sorry you have been dragged needlessly into this.” Hannibal was clearly contrite and upset.

Needlessly.

The word echoed around Will’s mind. He cursed the ache in his chest as needless too. He shouldn't be hurt by the word considering he was the one that had put a stop to anything before it could even begin.

“Its-” before Will could continue they heard cars pulling up, doors slamming, people screaming Hannibal’s name. Will frowned and moved to the window, parting the curtain enough to see that now, alongside the few photographers, was a gaggle of besotted young fans - a couple with signs declaring their love. “Well… shit.”

Will felt some of his anger melt away, just imagining what life must be like for Hannibal. It dawned on him that the omega must have to be selective over the company he kept. And he had wanted to keep company with Will…

Will shook his head but smiled nonetheless. “Apparently your whereabouts has been leaked.”

Hannibal looked even more contrite than Will had considered possible and damn near blushed.

“They are very dedicated. Is there a back way out? I don't want to inconvenience you more than I already have.”

Will's jaw tightened. If Hannibal left he'd never see him again and he wasn't sure he was ready for that. He didn't consider much beyond that thought before taking Hannibal’s hand and heading out the back door and into the woods.

*

By the time Will lit the lamps in the small hunting lodge it was near dark outside. It had only been a twenty minute walk from the house but Will hadn't realised that he had clutched Hannibal's hand the whole time they walked through the woods, only releasing it to open the door.

The lodge was shuttered but he had aired it recently enough that it wasn't musty. He didn't want to open the shutters and reveal the lamp light to anyone who might be snooping.

"This is lovely." Hannibal said. Will turned to see he was looking around, taking it all in. Will quirked a brow. The place was a peace and quiet for him, somewhere he came to think and be alone when he needed to - lovely wasn't what he'd call it.

The lodge was one large room, with an outhouse around the back. Originally meant for the butchery and hanging of hunting bounty, Will had repurposed it. There was a large and beat-up, overstuffed sofa covered in a variety of blankets and cushions - an instinctive aspect of omeganess he'd been unable to leave behind. There was a low coffee table that he had made by hand of a fallen tree, and a desk in one corner. Next to the desk was a small camping stove, and piled up canned food and bottles of water. Next to the door was an old oak ottoman where Will stored blankets and pillows for when he ended up staying out here on the sofa. Maybe it seemed little more than a step up from camping, but really it was often a sanctuary for him.

"Do you come out here often?" Hannibal asked, still looking around, spotting the small nicknacks here and there that Will hadn't even considered: some framed photos on the wall; a few little wooden carvings Will had whittled; the remnants of a little teacup kept in a once matching saucer.

Will sucked in a breath as Hannibal picked up a shard from the saucer and examined it with a gentle smile.

"Heirloom?"

Will breathed out slowly and moved to Hannibal, taking the shard in his own hands and nodding. "Yeah… it… it got broken." Will gently placed it back down and grabbed two bottles of water before indicating the sofa. They both sat and the omega seemed to relax into the soft comfort.

It gave Will a sort of bittersweet feeling - after all, this was essentially a nest. Something for the part of him that might always be somewhat omega - though he denied it's presence in his home. If the sickly feeling of a phantom heat hadn't come upon him so suddenly, he would just as likely have been out here curled under the blankets and thrashing through his nightmares when Hannibal called in.

He would have missed Hannibal altogether.
Maybe it was the thought of that or the closeness of the other man that made his skin prickle with sweat again. It was a horrible feeling, it made him feel completely at odds with his own body and he hated that there was nothing he could do about it in the short term. He shuddered.

“Are you alright Will?” Hannibal asked, opening his own bottle and then passing it across, exchanging it for the sealed one in Will’s hands.

He panted and nodded before downing half the bottle in a few steady gulps. “It’s… it’s not like a real heat. It’s just symptoms. I don’t need…” he felt his face flush and tried to continue. “I don’t need an alpha.” He swallowed hard and drank down the rest of the bottle and placing it on the table in front of him. “Just a few days of discomfort… it’s… bearable.” He clenched his jaw even as he said it. He had to continually remind himself that it was bearable, it really was. It was better than truly being in heat.

That thought - the thought of his last heat and Francis - flooded him with a sudden anguish and dysphoria that had him doubled in on himself.

“Will!” Hannibal’s concern was palpable as he leaned in and took hold of Will, easing him back on the sofa. “What can I do?”

Will shook his head. “Nothing. Maybe talk to me? It’s not normally this bad…” Will’s voice trembled.

“I fear this is partly my fault. The stress of hiding out here whilst your house is mobbed on my account cannot be good.” Hannibal opened the second bottle of water and passed that to Will, who took it gratefully and sipped for a few moments before placing it on the table.

“It’s not your fault. This happens… it’s just… it’s hard to be around people when this shit happens. I feel…” He bit his lower lip and turned away, looking over at the teacup on the desk.

Vulnerable.

Hannibal took Will’s hands in his and squeezed them. “Talk to me Will… I’m a good listener.” Hannibal smiled gently and Will saw him so clearly then. Not the famous actor, not the confident omega, not the aristocrat. Just Hannibal.

“I… I always knew I was different but it wasn’t until a few years ago that I really worked it out. And… now… you’d think things would get better, but they get so much worse first. Trying to present as alpha when everyone can scent you as omega. The dysphoria becoming intolerably worse now you know what it is, and there’s nothing you can do about it. Just years and years of hormones - going through secondary puberty all over again whilst still dealing with the physical remnants of the first…” Will shook his head realising how angry the words were coming out. “Even if you're not closeted it's still… it doesn't matter if you're open about being trans, it's still a really personal and private process and you have no choice but to go through it publicly. Not like you can hide away for the months and months it takes for your scent to change.”

“I can’t say I understand Will. I’m sure no one really does - it must be such a personal and unique journey for everyone. But… I’d like to try to understand what you need, what I can do. I… I miss you, and I’ll never bother you again if that’s what you’d like, but please know you can talk to me. Even if you decide never to see me again, I’ll listen-”

Will cut him off with harsh laughter and a shake of the head. “I’m just… it’s self preservation Hannibal. A trait common to alphas *and* omegas. I could tell you everything, but at the end it isn’t me who would leave.” His voice cracked a little at the end and he pulled his legs up to sit himself in a near ball.

“I will accept that challenge.” Hannibal said softly, with a slight smile.

Chapter End Notes

So just a personal note to say, as I know a lot of you have been following my journey - I had my first shot of testosterone today. Hormone therapy has begun! :)

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Memories, baggage and a happy ending.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT TRIGGERS FOR THIS CHAPTER!!: In this chapter, before the happy ending comes to pass, Will discusses his past with Francis. This includes talk of dysphoria, self-loathing, self-hatred, mental and emotional abuse, transphobia and attempted sexual assault. It is an important part of Will's story but for anyone that wants to skip it I have separated that section with >------< at the beginning and end. I hope the story still makes enough sense if you skip it - suffice to say Francis was not much help in Will accepting his true self.

Will took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

“I always knew there was something… off. For many years I just presumed I was attracted to the same secondary gender, and that worked for a while. I never really committed to anything serious, but I had my fair share of omegan lovers.

“But… then I met this guy, Francis. He was sweet, gentle. We hit it off over our shitty childhood’s and need to just have someone care, and one thing lead to another. We seemed to work at first, moved in together. We were together a little over two years when I started to really not be ok in myself. Now that I had a long term sexual and romantic relationship I was starting to understand myself better and the things that had never added up. I was honest with Francis about everything, talked to him about all these feelings I was having from the very beginning. Even though I knew that was likely not a good idea. He was… fragile sometimes. He struggled to handle his own shit on occasion and I felt like I was just adding to his load. But I had to tell him, and at first he was supportive of my explorations. Hell, he even bought my first knotting ring.”

Will looked to Hannibal with a slight blush but was relieved and reassured to see the omega wasn’t phased in the least at discussing sex toys. That was just the tip of the iceberg.

“The first time I knotted him… damn, it felt… it felt like coming home, y’know? It felt so right. And that was where the problems started. It made me really start to consider that I wasn’t just a butch omega-loving-omega, that maybe there was more to it. And the more I realised that, the more I started to realise these feelings and realise they had always been there and just… Even looking back to when I was a kid? Like, I remember in sex-ed at school the alphas all joking about how big their knots were and I fucking…” he grimaced but then let out a chuckle. “I asked the teacher when I would get my knot. I was humiliated. The teacher was sweet about it, but the other kids never let me forget it. I spent years feeling so alpha and deliberately going out of my way to be as omega as possible as a result, to hide it. I

just figured all omegas felt that way? Like, who wants to be treated the way society treats omegas? And surely they all had a secret longing to have a knot of their own? Turns out - as Francis let me know loud and clear - that is not the case."

He grabbed the water from the table and swigged it back until it was almost all gone. Partly thirst, partly trying to order his thoughts. He had never spoken about this before, never told anyone everything that had happened between him and Francis. It had been easier to move on, start over, just as he and his dad had done so many times when he was a kid. Such a damn alpha reaction to problems, quite laughably, though he hardly saw the humour in it.

He played the bottle over in his hands, looking down at it as he continued.

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"At this point I wasn't doing well. I… I was really low. Somewhere in limbo - having worked out there was a problem and trying to work out the whole of it and what could be done. I had six months or more of just feeling like I was neither one thing or the other and… that was… it was horrific. It had been manageable whilst Francis was still supportive but then he turned. And I really mean, he turned." Will tried to convey how strongly he meant that with a sharp glance at the omega. "It was like he'd been hiding this beastly part of himself inside the whole time - twisted and bigoted. And I was too weak to leave… I was so down on myself already, so lost, that having the person who was supposed to love me telling me I was vile and I would never find anyone else… well, it was too easy to believe. I'm not even sure I could tell you, looking back now, when it crossed the line from quiet digs and comments into verbal and emotional abuse. And in truth, even though I know different now… I still believe every damn word he said to me."

Will let out a heavy sigh. He couldn't say exactly when the line was crossed because he'd never inspected it too closely, it had always been too painful. Too hard to consider how easy it was to believe everything negative Francis had said about him. His throat and chest ached but he pushed himself to continue now he'd started.

"The breaking point was…" he swallowed and felt a cold shiver crawl over his skin. "I… I'd seen my doctor, discussed options. I was referred to a gender identity specialist and that was when shit hit the fan. Francis at no point denied my feelings - if anything he validated them - saying that he agreed I was clearly alpha… he didn't even really have an issue with me starting to present myself that way as I tried to work through it - even bought me an alpha scent. But, day by day he just wore me down with comments and… when I say verbal and emotional abuse I need to explain - he never raised his voice to me. Never screamed and shouted, never called me names so directly or was abusive in that sense. No, every day he just whittled me down that little bit more with his reassurances that I was made wrong and no one else would ever want me but it was ok as long as I never gave him cause to leave me. It was… looking back now I just… I don't even recognise the person he wore me down to. I've always been a loner, being on my own had never bothered me before but he twisted and manipulated until I started to think I couldn't live without him."

Will let out a shuddering sigh and closed his eyes, rubbing his forehead.

"We can stop Will, you don't have to-"

“No… I’m fine.” Will cut Hannibal off, not sure he could handle the note of deep concern in the omega’s voice. “I, I need to get this out. You need to know everything… I saw a specialist… I got therapy and a diagnosis as gender dysphoric. They gave me the option of hormones but they needed clean blood tests before they could say whether or not that would be viable and work out the dosages. I hadn’t even decided that was the way I wanted to go, but either way, decided the tests wouldn’t hurt. I just… It meant I had to come off my suppressants for at least three months before they could run the tests for hormone free results. That was when Francis left me. He’d worn me down completely, I was lost and vulnerable, gripping onto this new truth about myself with no support. He said he didn’t want an omega with a knot. He didn’t want an alpha with… with a cunt. I couldn’t be both so I was nothing. He moved out and I struggled on my own, but I could just about make ends meet. It was just… everything was suddenly so much harder.”

He looked over at the teacup again and felt the sting of tears at the corner of his eyes.

“I… I never really knew my mother. She died when I was a kid, I just have these really vague memories of her. A couple of faded photos. And… I used to have a tea set. I do remember she fucking loved that tea set - her best china for when we had guests. I wasn’t allowed to play with it.” He smiled at the memory, as faded as the photos on the wall. “I took the set when I left my dad’s house. It was pretty much the only thing I did take other than the clothes on my back.” He shrugged, another story, not relevant now, and wondered if might feel familiar to some of the stories of loss and loneliness Hannibal had mentioned of his childhood. He shook his head and clenched his jaw as fresher memories surfaced. “I kept that set in perfect condition, never used it. Then… I’d been off my suppressants maybe two months, and Francis starts coming over now and then. Never says sorry, never says he wants to come back. He just, I guess he wasn’t done with me. Then one day he comes and… I… I was in heat.”

Will’s breath caught and Hannibal tentatively took hold of his hand, squeezing it a little when Will didn’t pull away.

“He went nuts. Neither of us had had a heat whilst we were together, both on suppressants, and… I don’t know… it just… he was so angry about it. Said he should find that fucking knotting ring he bought me and fuck me through it - show me how omega I really was. Screaming at me that no omega would want to be fucked by a useless pseudoknot so I was better off omega anyway... I… I’ve never… I haven’t spent a heat with anyone. He… I was just so out of it with the heat, and it took everything I had to fend him off. He just started smashing the place up, took that tea set and smashed it into so many tiny pieces. By the time he turned his attention back to me, one of the neighbours had called the police. They arrested him and…” Will took a deep breath and let his head drop back onto the back of the sofa. “I guess they didn’t really know what to do, so they took me to a Heat Clinic.”

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“Oh Will.” Hannibal squeezed his hand again, a seemingly involuntary reaction, as was the sweep of his thumb back and forth over the back of Will’s hand.

Will let out a dark chuckle. “Yeah, that place wasn’t much fun. When I got out I went back to our place, packed up. Moved here. The only bits I could rescue of the tea set you see over

there - they had ended up under the table. A chipped saucer and the remnants of a cup that managed to almost escape." He shrugged. "Felt poignant… still sort of does."

"That's… Will, I…"

"You don't have to say anything Hannibal. The fact is… I'm so damaged, and as much as I'd like to believe there's no truth in anything Francis told me, I just don't. I can't bring myself to believe - to hope - that anyone would ever want me. I'm not one thing nor the other. No matter how comfortable I become with my own body, that comfort will never be shared by anyone else, Francis made that clear, he-"

"Will." Hannibal's voice was stern and Will had no choice but to look at him - his expression determined. "How can you believe anything that man told you?"

Will considered for a moment and laughed. "I guess I don't. I believe me… I believe what I feel - Francis just put a voice to those feelings, just confirmed them for me. I'm never going to be what anyone wants and I'm fine with that. I need you to be too, because I just… I can't, I don't want to hurt you, and that isn't something we can avoid. I'm no good for a relationship, not even sure I'm much good for friendship, I'd just end up disappointing you and-"

"No." Hannibal looked angry, truly angry and it took Will aback a little. "You can't just decide that for me. If you don't want to explore what could be between us then that's one thing, but you can't decide that on my behalf too."

"Fuck." Will shook his head, feeling for a moment no better than Francis. Hannibal was right of course, as much as that pained him. "You're… I'm sorry, you're right. I can't decide that for you." He huffed out a sigh. "But I do have to decide it for myself."

There was a long silence then, neither of them looking at each other but Hannibal didn't let go of his hand.

"I would never try to persuade you to decide in my favour." Hannibal finally said quietly.

Will gave a gentle smile. "I know. And that's almost enough for me to want to."

*

Francis held him down as his blood boiled and a heat years denied burned through his body. A nightmare within a nightmare.

Will had to be sleeping, he wanted to wake up. This couldn't be real. He couldn't keep fighting Francis over and over. It was too exhausting.

He squirmed, too drained to throw the man off. What if he wasn't able to this time?

He screamed his frustration.

And then Francis was gone, but there was something there. The rage-filled weight of the man had lifted but another weight had replaced it. Something warm and comforting and scented

like spices growing in soil wet from a tropical storm

When Will woke up the low grade fever of the last couple of days had broken. He felt exhausted and his muscles ached, but he no longer felt sick. The phantom heat, such as it was, had finally passed.

He allowed himself to snuggle deeper into the comfort of the old sofa when he felt something against him. A weight and a heat to his chest. It took a moment for the post-fever haze to clear enough to discern the warmth of another body not only pressed to his own but curled together. His face was nestled in the crook of Hannibal's neck as the omega faced him, snuggled against his chest on the sofa only just big enough for two. When the fog finally lifted altogether he realised there was a low and calming purr coming from somewhere deep in Hannibal's chest. Will couldn't purr like that anymore - the hormones having altered his own responses to a low growl. But he was pretty sure never had purred for anyone in his life, and now Hannibal was purring for him.

This felt so strangely intimate that it should be awkward but was nothing other than comforting. Will tried to shift, to make more room for Hannibal, squashed as he was between Will and the back of the sofa.

The night before came back to him. In the vulnerability of his heat he had told Hannibal everything but he didn't regret it - it would surely be enough to finally convince the omega that there could never be anything between them even without the added complication of Hannibal's stardom. Will would never be right for someone.

He remembered they had fallen silent, Hannibal had got up and fetched more water for the both of them. And at some point they had drifted off.

"You had another nightmare." Hannibal's voice was thick with sleep.

He looked down to see the omega's eyes blinking open, his face serene and open. There was nothing false about it but Will realised rather keenly that it was for his benefit.

"Worse than before?"

"Very much so. I'm sorry to be presumptuous, but… I was unsure what else to do. I couldn't wake you and I… I just followed my instinct."

"And what did your instincts tell you?" Will was genuinely curious as to how they had ended up snuggled in this way, even slightly amused.

"They… told me to comfort the alpha. To give you my scent and let it calm you. And, well it worked. Once I managed to settle you to my neck you were soothed."

Will felt warmed through by the words and the gesture. He had a niggling voice at the back of his mind - sounding suspiciously like Francis - telling him to dismiss his reactions to Hannibal and even Hannibal's words. After all he wasn't *really* an alpha. Hannibal could never surely see him as an alpha.

“The purring… I apologise for.” Hannibal added sheepishly. “It was unnecessary, though it appeared to sooth you further. I just… I was unable to…” The omega blushed and Will frowned. “It’s never happened to me so involuntarily before, I’m so embarrassed. I… being curled up with an alpha I’m very much attracted to apparently had an effect on me.” He gave a short and light self-deprecating laugh and bit his lower lip.

Will gave a curt nod as he realised what Hannibal was talking about - the purring hadn’t been to sooth Will, it had been Hannibal’s natural reaction to their proximity. To an alpha he wanted. It was contentment.

Something inside Will broke, painfully. His chest tightened and he would have doubled over had the omega not been in the way, still curled against him as he was. He closed his eyes and grit his teeth.

He didn’t want to hurt Hannibal by fucking everything up, by being the disappointment Francis had convinced him he was. But it seemed inevitable to hurt Hannibal now. In fact, he likely already had. His not trying was going to hurt Hannibal either way.

“Will? I’m sorry if I’ve upset or embarrassed you.” Hannibal started to move away, trying to back off him a little and get enough purchase to pull off of the sofa completely.

“Wait.” Will pulled Hannibal back to him without even thinking - his face burying itself into Hannibal’s neck of its own accord. He breathed deeply and felt so much from that scent - calm, peace, adoration, lust. His eyes fluttered closed as he allowed himself to drown in the omega’s scent - speaking to him as loudly as any words Hannibal had uttered.

“Will I… If you don’t let me go soon I’m not sure I’ll be able to let you when you try.” He breathed the words, a tremor to them which Will could feel through the omega’s body.

Yes, he had to decide in that moment. Follow the logic - twisted as some might claim it to be - that this was doomed because he would never be whole enough for someone else. Or follow instinct… which was currently telling him to knot the omega that clung to him - to sink his teeth in and bond with the man, everything else be damned.

“I…” The realisation hit Will and choked him. “I could never bond with you - hormones don’t… there’s nothing that… it would still be like two omegas…”

“Will…” Hannibal pulled back to look at him and Will noticed then quite how breathless and flushed the man was. “There is absolutely nothing about you that is like an omega and I don’t need a bonding bite to prove that to me.”

Will groaned at the words and felt his cock filling.

Perhaps it was the after effects of the phantom heat, perhaps it was this new level of closeness last night’s confessions had brought about. Maybe it was just having Hannibal Lecter pressed against him - his sweet-spiced scent becoming all the richer as his arousal became clear.

The thought of sliding into Hannibal’s slick, wet heat was enough to make Will groan.

Hannibal pushed Will a little so that he was at the very edge of the sofa but now at least flat on his back with Hannibal looming over him.

“Will, I… this isn’t. I’m not trying to seduce you.”

Will barked a laugh at the words and nodded. The idea of anyone trying to ever seduce him was somewhat laughable.

“I mean that… I hadn’t planned this. We could still stop. In fact, we probably should. After our talk last night, and our escape from the adoring fans. This isn’t… we are neither of us probably in the right frame of mind to act on our-”

Will pulled Hannibal into a kiss.

It was slow and gentle, with a little too much teeth, they chuckled against each other. It felt like coming home.

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Will crept around the side of the house and was relieved to see that everyone, including the paparazzi had given up and left. He looked back to Hannibal, still waiting at the edge of the wood, and signalled with a thumbs up. Hannibal smiled and started over, joining Will as he opened the back door and let them back into the house.

Winston looked up indignantly and then matched himself straight out the backdoor.

“He’s upset you left him.” Hannibal sympathised.

Will laughed. “No, he’s trying to guilt me into giving him treats.” Will pointed at the doggy door that Winston could have left through any time he wanted. He could have even joined them at the lodge, he knew the damn way.

Will found himself weirdly grateful that the dog had left them undisturbed and resolved to, in fact, give him many treats when he returned from his sulk.

In the meantime he turned to look at Hannibal. The omega seemed so weirdly at home pottering around the living room. They had barely spent any time indoors - at most to eat the dinners Will had discovered Hannibal had prepared. It felt so terribly comfortable having him there.

“I’m going to grab a shower.” Will blurted and wandered off.

He was glad they had stopped themselves in the lodge. Glad that Hannibal had pulled back from the kiss all flushed and breathless and insisted that they didn’t rush into anything. Having not showered for a couple of days, Will was okay with this decision.

But in truth he’d been disappointed too. He was finding it harder to deny his desire for Hannibal - not just in a physical sense. He had spent weeks getting to know the locals and finally becoming part of the community and yet none of them had come close to providing him with the enjoyment and comfort just a little of Hannibal’s company had provided.

Now, as he didn't wait for the water to fully warm before jumping in, his head was somewhere else. Warring between believing everything he thought he knew, everything Francis had ever confirmed about how deeply undesirable Will would always be - and Hannibal's obvious and truthful desires.

Could this work? Could Hannibal be happy with him? Could he be what Hannibal needed?

He absent-mindedly poured soap into his hands and scrubbed it through his hair and over his body, trying to ignore the twinge in his cock that the memory of Hannibal's scent caused.

The scent was stronger now and Will wasn't sure how he had ever resisted it. He had always been aroused by omegan scent, but since starting hormones, his reaction had been… very alpha. His cock was already thickening and he resisted the urge to soap it up and jerk off.

The hormone therapy had given him a more alpha-physique, had enhanced his omega penis by an inch in length and substantial girth. He was personally happy with the small knot that had formed and enjoyed squeezing and kneading it when masturbating, but he knew full well it wasn't enough to satisfy an omega. And that was the thought that he returned to again.

He shut off the water and grabbed the towel he'd hung up.

The scent was stronger again and he tried to ignore it. It was going to take all his resolve to finally end this once and for all.

Will dried off as he walked from his bathroom into his bedroom, where the scent hit him like a wall. He blinked at the naked and quite lovely Hannibal Lecter sprawled on his bed.

"Alpha…" Hannibal breathed the word. "I'm sorry I… I think I changed my mind about waiting." Hannibal blushed… only it wasn't a blush.

"Oh shit." Will laughed feeling suddenly lighter, feeling strangely like everything would be ok.

"It's not due for another week but…" Hannibal looked coy and then chuckled himself. "I guess my body had other ideas."

"Fuck… I…" Will hesitated, unsure what to say or do.

"I'm… I can call someone to come get me, I have a private clinic I usually attend. I should be able to get there before my heat fully hits." Hannibal started to get up from the bed, but Will moved quickly. Suddenly so very sure.

There were few things that could bring on an early heat - Hannibal wasn't sick, hadn't received a shock -Will's mind ticked off the possibilities down to one and it made his chest swell. Hannibal was starting to go into heat because he had wanted - desired on some primal level that his body was pushing him to consummate - to mate with an alpha he had been in close proximity with. His body was responding to that alpha in the instinctive way it couldn't deny. It was responding to the scent, the presence, the potential - the desire for their conjoining.

Desire for an alpha. For Will.

Will growled, deep in his throat. Yes, thanks to the hormones and yet nothing felt more real. It didn't feel artificial or induced - it felt like he should have always been able to do that and the hormones had simply allowed it.

Hannibal responded with a deep and gratifying purr as he dropped back onto the bed at Will's approach.

"Alpha" He moaned as Will dropped the towel he had forgotten he was holding, now as naked as Hannibal as he approached the omega.

"Knot me Will, I want to feel you. I've been so desperate to feel you for so long…" Hannibal purred the words, and as seductive as they were, Will hesitated as he began to lower himself over the omega.

"I… It's not… it won't feel like… a real…" He swallowed.

"It feels real." Hannibal breathed the words out and Will startled a little but didn't pull away as one of Hannibal's hands snaked gently across Will's hip and to the base of his cock. Hannibal moaned his desire as his hand went around Will's knot, kneading it in a way that made Will's eyes roll in his head. "I need this inside me, please Will… alpha…"

"Fuck." Will was so painfully hard that he was glad when Hannibal's hand moved in favour of pulling Will the rest of the way down to him. They were both panting as Hannibal slowly spread his thighs and welcomed Will between them.

Will wasn't stupid, he knew the reality was that once Hannibal was in heat he would need more than Will's undersized knot to sate him. But that wasn't enough to stop Will now as he buried his face in Hannibal's neck. He breathed in the scent and moaned again, feeling Hannibal's hands snake up into his hair. They gripped lightly and pulled him back enough to kiss - gentle and soft like before. An exploration whilst they still could.

Will understood Hannibal's want then - slow and tender before they had to give into the demands of Hannibal's body for something more frenzied.

Will whimpered into the kiss as he moved his hips forward, his cock pressing to Hannibal's slick omegan sex and sliding gently in until he was buried almost completely within the omega.

They broke the kiss then and stilled, looking at each other intently. Studying a reflected adoration.

"Alpha." Hannibal sighed.

Will rested his forehead to Hannibal's as he began to move. A slow and gentle rhythm as he lost himself in the scent and sensation of the omega beneath him. Hannibal's legs came up and wrapped around him, pulling him deeper until his now swollen knot pushed with each languid thrust against Hannibal's wet entrance.

Will's breath came in uneven pants as the arousal he felt drew a little slick from him, running down and mingling with Hannibal's deeply fragrant and more substantial ambrosia.

"Knot me alpha." Hannibal whispered next to his ear and he let his hips snap forward almost on instinct, drawing a gasp from Hannibal as he buried himself to the hilt. Even now, fully inflated, the knot fit comfortably if snug. It wouldn't be substantial enough to lock them together, even so the feeling - the sensation of knotting someone for the first time - made Will cry out.

Hannibal clenched around him and Will groaned, unable to move for fear of cumming. He just held himself, panting against Hannibal as the omega moved under him, moaning his own pleasure.

"I want to ride you Will…" Hannibal said - another whisper - and it made Will shudder even as he nodded. There was little Will could say to deny him even if he wanted to, which he didn't. The idea of the omega taking what he needed, when Will was already so overwhelmed, sent a shiver across his skin.

They rolled, Will almost slipping from Hannibal until the omega repositioned and settled himself down on Will's hard cock - knot and all.

Hannibal hummed his pleasure and began purring again as he circled his hips, clenching his inner muscles until both actions had Will arching up off the bed in an effort to thrust further into his lover. Hannibal began to ride him then, moving himself up and down only a fraction - short and shallow thrusts so as not to let the knot slip from him, clenching on each upward motion to simulate them being tied together.

Will's hands flew to Hannibal's hips but did nothing to guide the man, letting him move as he would. He could only pant and huff as Hannibal worked him, the occasional whimper escaping from him as Hannibal tightened.

"You feel so good alpha…" Hannibal purred, his eyes completely blown now and his heat creeping closer.

Will thought of the next few days ahead - of helping Hannibal through his heat if he would allow it. He could use the knot add-on that he had never had cause to try - a knot ring especially for trans alphas or alphas with micro-knots. He could imagine slipping it on and stroking himself to hardness, taking Hannibal as he presented on his hands and knees. Tying them together with his knot.

The thought had him crying out and he gripped tight on Hannibal's hips and thrust up into him erratically as he came.

"Hannibal…" He breathed out the name, feeling his eyes sting with tears. Hannibal leaned in, kissing the tears away as he took himself in hand, jerking himself between them until he came a moment later on their bellies. His inner muscles gripped Will's knot and had Will cumming again with a long sob.

“I want to stay inside you forever…” Will muttered against the flesh of Hannibal’s neck as the omega collapsed onto him.

“I promise you can, Will.” Hannibal panted in return. “And I always keep my promises.”

*

One Year Later

“See you next week Will.” Alana gave the usual warm smile and he nodded in response as he left the office. Seeing a psychiatrist wasn’t something he’d ever planned - he didn’t like to be psychoanalysed and people didn’t like him when he was. But it had been eight months and it was working well. Having someone to just talk over what he was going through with transitioning, his fears and anxieties, had been something he’d needed to do if he had any hope of being who he wanted to be for Hannibal. And more importantly, for himself.

And a couple of months earlier they’d begun to unpackage all the shit with Francis and deal with that too. That was some painful stuff, but Will begrudgingly admitted that therapy was actually working out for him.

“Unless of course I see you at the bar this weekend?” Alana asked.

Will turned back at the door and could not help his smile one little bit. “Hannibal’s back this weekend, he’s been on location for the last three weeks so…” he shrugged and felt his face heat.

Alana let out a light chuckle and nodded. “Maybe next weekend when you’re done catching up.”

Will’s face split into a grin before he could help himself and he couldn’t even attempt to hide it as he made his way out to his car. In fact he was pretty sure it didn’t leave his face as he pulled up outside his house, seeing Hannibal’s car was already there.

He practically tripped over himself trying to get into the house.

Hannibal was sat on the sofa making a fuss over Winston and feeding him treats. Will’s heart swelled and his face now ached from the grinning.

“I didn’t think you’d be back until tonight.”

“I…” Hannibal looked up and smiled at him adoringly. “I missed you, decided to leave after breakfast instead.”

Will was only half listening as he nodded and moved to the sofa, pulling Hannibal to his feet much to Winston’s chagrin. The dog grumbled and then headed out his doggy door as Will pulled Hannibal to him and into a deep kiss.

“Next production isn’t for another month, we have plenty of time.” Hannibal laughed as he pulled back.

Will was nodding and already taking off his shirt. “Sure, but…” he hopped on one leg as he pulled off a shoe. “But you’ve been gone weeks…” He started undoing Hannibal’s shirt and the omega laughed before helping out. “I think… I really need to knot you right now, and rub my scent all over you.” Will grinned.

Hannibal laughed again and nodded his assent. And there was a twinkle in his eyes as he smiled and Will knew what it was - the happiness there from Will being so forward in his alphaness.

It had been hard in the beginning, still so lacking in confidence, but Hannibal had sought every day and in every way he could think of to assure Will of his alphaness. It was there, Will just had to have the confidence in it, had to stop listening to the cruel voices in his head that told him he was nothing - a freak whether alpha or omega. And slowly, Will had begun to believe in it.

Hannibal had relocated to Wolf Trap, moving in with Will - though they improved the fencing on the property to avoid fans and photographers. He ran his side of the production company from there and even occasionally took small parts in movies that particularly interested him. But for the most part they focused on making the kind of movies that no one made enough of - same secondary gender love stories, trans romance, asexual and queerplatonic relationships. The fringe market to be sure, but Hannibal - and Clarice - were passionate about giving those people who identified with their movies fully developed characters *to* identify with. No 2-dimensional token characters, no deaths, no lessons to be learned - just love.

And that was the biggest lesson Will had learned himself. Because Hannibal had moved to Wolf Trap for love. And so Will was going to be the best alpha he could be for the omega, and see a therapist, and do the occasional carpentry job on sets for the production company, and knot his omega over and over whenever he needed it - because he loved him just as desperately in return. He would always do anything for Hannibal.

He knew it without having to look over at the ornately displayed teacup and saucer, mended with beautiful gold dusted lacquer by Hannibal himself. He had presented it to Will as a moving in gift, telling him -

“As a philosophy, Kintsugi treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise.” And Will knew Hannibal wasn’t just talking about the teacup.

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